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Saint Francis Recognized for Quality, Cost-Effective Bariatric Surgery
Healthcare facility among first in nation to receive new designation

Hartford, CT (February 16, 2015) – Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Connecticut has recognized Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center as one of the first healthcare facilities in the nation to receive *Blue Distinction Center* and *Blue Distinction® Center+* designations in the area of bariatric surgery by the *Blue Distinction® Centers for Specialty Care* program. Saint Francis earned a *Blue Distinction Center+* designation for stapling procedures, as well as a *Blue Distinction* designation for banding.

Blue Distinction® Centers are nationally designated healthcare facilities shown to deliver quality specialty care based on objective measures, developed with input from the medical community for patient safety and better health outcomes. To receive a *Blue Distinction Center* and a *Blue Distinction® Center +for Bariatric Surgery* designation, a healthcare facility must demonstrate success in meeting patient safety as well as bariatric-specific quality measures, including complications and readmissions, for gastric stapling and/or gastric banding procedures. A healthcare facility must also have earned national accreditations at both the facility level and the bariatric care-specific level, as well as demonstrate better cost efficiency relative to its peers.

Quality is key: only those facilities that first meet Blue Distinction’s nationally-established, objective quality measures are considered for designation as a *Blue Distinction Center* or a *Blue Distinction Center+*.

“This designation is a reflection of our continued commitment to ensuring the best possible outcomes for our patients,” said Jon R. Pirrello, M.D., Director of Bariatric Surgery at Saint Francis. “Bariatric surgery has been shown to be very effective at producing significant and sustained weight-loss, as well as reducing co-morbidities such as diabetes, sleep apnea, high blood pressure and cholesterol. We take great pride in providing expert care in a safe and reliable environment.”

Bariatric surgeries are among the most common elective surgeries in the U.S. There were 179,000 bariatric surgeries performed in 2013, according to the American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery. The average cost is more than \$28,000 per episode, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Furthermore, it is estimated that 72 million Americans are obese and 24 million suffer from morbid obesity, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The estimated annual healthcare cost of obesity-related illnesses is \$190.2 billion, or nearly 21 percent of annual medical spending in the U.S., according to the *Journal of Health Economics*.

“Anthem would like to congratulate Saint Francis for earning these two prestigious distinctions,” said Peter Bowers, MD, medical director, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield. “We praise them for their commitment to quality and for helping their patients better manage their care through the Blue Distinction Specialty program.”

Research shows that facilities designated as *Blue Distinction Centers or Blue Distinction Centers+* demonstrate better quality and improved outcomes for patients compared with their peers. On average, Blue Distinction Centers+ are also 20 percent or more cost efficient than non-BDC+ designated healthcare facilities.

Since 2006, the *Blue Distinction Centers for Specialty Care* program has helped patients find quality providers for their specialty care needs in the areas of bariatric surgery, cardiac care, complex and rare cancers, knee and hip replacements, spine surgery, and transplants. For more information about the program and for a complete listing of the designated facilities, please visit www.bcbs.com/bluedistinction.

About Saint Francis Care

Saint Francis Care is an integrated healthcare delivery system established by Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, an anchor institution in north central Connecticut since 1897. Licensed for 617 beds and 65 bassinets, it is a major teaching hospital and the largest Catholic hospital in New England. Other major entities of Saint Francis Care include The Mount Sinai Rehabilitation Hospital, the Connecticut Joint Replacement Institute, the Hoffman Heart and Vascular Institute of Connecticut, the Saint Francis/Mount Sinai Regional Cancer Center, the Joyce D. and Andrew J. Mandell Center for Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Care and Neuroscience Research, and Saint Francis HealthCare Partners. Johnson Memorial Medical Center, parent organization of Johnson Memorial Hospital, Evergreen Health Care Center, and Home and Community Health Services is also a Saint Francis Care Partner. Saint Francis Care's services are supported by a network of five major Access Centers and eight additional medical office centers sited throughout the region. For more information, visit www.stfranciscare.com.

About Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Connecticut

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About Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

The Blue Cross Blue Shield Association is a national federation of 37 independent, community-based and locally operated Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies that collectively provide healthcare coverage for nearly 105 million members – one in three Americans. For more information on the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association and its member companies, please visit bcbs.com. We encourage you to connect with us on [Facebook](#), check out our videos on [YouTube](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) and check out [The BCBS Blog](#), for up-to-date information about BCBSA.

About Blue Distinction Centers

Blue Distinction Centers (BDC) met overall quality measures for patient safety and outcomes, developed with input from the medical community. Blue Distinction Centers+ (BDC+) also met cost measures that address consumers' need for affordable healthcare. Individual outcomes may vary. National criteria is displayed on www.bcbs.com. A Local Blue Plan may require additional criteria for facilities located in its own service area. For details on Local Blue Plan Criteria, a provider's in-network status, or your own policy's coverage, contact your Local Blue Plan. Each facility's cost of care is evaluated using data from its Local Blue Plan. Facilities in CA, ID, NY, PA, and WA may lie in two Local Blue Plans' areas, resulting in two evaluations for cost of care; and their own Local Blue Plans decide whether one or both cost of care evaluation(s) must meet BDC+ national criteria. Neither Blue Cross Blue Shield Association nor any Blue Plans are responsible for damages or non-covered charges resulting from Blue Distinction or other provider finder information or care received from Blue Distinction or other providers.